

THE TOP TWELVE

ISSUES OF INTEREST IN LANCASTER COUNTY

October - December 2004

1. Coalitions are alive and well. Below is a brief description and contact person should you want more detailed information:

Family Violence Council - addresses public education, data collection and systems change. Annual reports available. Contact Bob Moyer, 489-9292.

Homeless Coalition - is examining appropriate data collection systems, homeless teens, and funding opportunities. Contact Rena Worth, Housing Authority, 467-2371.

Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Coalition - is a broad representation of community agencies, organizations and individuals working together to find common solutions to the issues resulting from teen pregnancy. The coalition respects a diversity of philosophical viewpoints and does not, as a group, advocate for specific solutions and viewpoints, but leaves these philosophical positions to each member organization. As a group, the Coalition works together in those areas of group agreement.

Truancy Coalition is forming action plans and recommendation to reduce the amount of truancy in our public schools. Contact: Petra Smith, Cedars Youth Services, 437-8988.

Immediate Needs is the focus of elementary school principals as they address mental health issues with youth. To be involved contact either Becky Wild, Lincoln Public Schools, 436-1650, or Kit Boesch, Lincoln/Lancaster County Human Services Administrator, 441-6868.

New Americans Task Force - addresses issues which encourage acceptance, cultural competency, and acculturation issues of new persons coming into this country. Contact Terry Showalter, Lincoln Literacy Council, 476-7323 or go to: www.newamericanstaskforce.org/whois.html.

Community Child Abuse Prevention Council (CCAPC) - embraces public education as a prevention tool. Agency networking and community activities focus on child abuse/neglect issues. Contact, Deb VanDyke-Ries, CASA for Lancaster County, 474-5161.

Human Services Federation (HSF) - a network of 106 agencies dedicated to providing a quality of life in Lincoln, Lancaster County through the provision of a cost effective, accessible, and culturally competent human service network. Contact Rick Carter, Director, 441-4399 or go to: www.hsfed.org.

CSI-Lincoln - is the implementation process of strategic planning in seven key areas. For details go to: www.csip.unl.edu or contact Robyn Henderson, UNL Public Policy Center, 472-5678.

Multi Modal Transportation - a task force dedicated to improving all modes of travel in Lincoln/Lancaster County. Contact Kent Morgan, Chair, 441-7491.

Juvenile Justice Review Committee (JJRC) - addresses issues of prevention, intervention, and aftercare of youth in or at risk of entering the juvenile justice system. Contact Sheryl Schrepf, Families First and Foremost (F3), 441-4870.

Group Home Task Force - a City of Lincoln task force dedicated to examining the State of Nebraska and the City of Lincoln roles in regulation and licensure; for purpose of improving quality of care; and neighborhood safety. Contact: Kent Morgan, Chair, 441-7491.

2. 'Let Em Play' is a city wide effort to reduce violence in youth sports. A major effort of the Sports Conduct Committee, it has also drawn the attention of organizations statewide. Project Coordinator, Bob Moyer, 489-9292.
3. The Lincoln/Lancaster County Human Services Office on 555 South 9th Street has new faces. Welcome to Dr. Joyce Schmeeckle, who will be doing the evaluation of our Drug Free Communities and SICA grants; and Melissa Beecher, our new Juvenile Justice Coordinator. Melissa replaces Anne Hobbs in this contract position.
4. The Substance Abuse Action Coalition (SAAC) has three areas of focus: Prevention, Treatment, and the Criminal Justice System. The Prevention Team has received a Drug Free Communities Grant (\$450,000 over five years) and a SICA Grant for \$165,000 from Nebraska Health and Human Services; Treatment has received a \$60,000 R.W. Johnson grant; and the Criminal Justice Team has been working with the State of Nebraska on Standardized Evaluations and a Lancaster County Conference is planned for the Spring of 2005. To become involved contact Otto Schultz, 770-1974.
5. Ride for \$5!! That's right, for the next six months low income residents can purchase unlimited ride tickets for \$5/month (\$10 handivan). This is a pilot project. If it's going to work agencies need to encourage their clients and staff to ride. For more information call Wayne Svoboda, Volunteer Partners, 435-2100.
6. Families First and Foremost (F3) - works with children (and their families) who have mental health issues. The Office of Juvenile Mental Health addresses these concerns with children in or at risk of entering the juvenile justice system as well as other families seeking support. For more information contact Sheryl Schrepf at F3, 441-4870.
7. The Kroc Foundation is granting millions of dollars to cities to build super sized recreational facilities in their community. The funding arm is through the Salvation Army. The City of Lincoln, non-profits, and especially Parks and Recreation is working closely with the Salvation Army to secure this funding. If it comes through it will be an incredible affordable facility for Lincoln.

8. The Transitional Services Network is designing The Hub—a transitional services project for high risk youth/young adults ages 16-24. It will assist in areas of housing, education, employment, behavioral health and other emergency needs where no formal and informal support networks are available. The lease has been signed at 727 South 9th Street. Contact Project Director, Dwight Brown, Jr., at 471-4515.

By the way, will the legislature change the Age of Majority from 19 to 18? If so, 50% of the Child Support Collection folks will not be happy...but 50% will! The State will save, or could reinvest monies; kids we send to war and to the voting booths can actually be called adults; and we would join 46 other states that already recognize this! This is the third time we have asked. Is third time, charm? Public hearing at the interim study is Friday, October 1, 2004, 1:30 p.m., State Capitol, Room 1113. To voice your support call Senator Brashear, chair of the Judiciary Committee (471-2621).

9. Homelessness is often a hidden social problem in Lincoln which surfaces its ugly head when the weather gets cold or when supporting structures change. DayWatch closed in August. But thanks to the support and generosity of the People's City Mission, there is now a great Day Shelter open (and transportation to get to the People's City Mission). They are seeing 30-40 folks daily and anticipate this growing as the numbers increase.
10. Medical Interpretation/Translation is badly needed in this community. With our many new non-English speaking clients, this critical gap is one which the Community Health Endowment, this office, and many partners will be addressing.
11. Kudos to our military for their work here at home!
 - A. Did you know that the Marine Corps Reserves hold a national Toys for Tots (ages 0-12) program every December? They will work in conjunction with the United Way and hope to serve another 1,000 children this year in Lincoln! Contact 441-6070 for more information.
 - B. Did you know the Army National Guard runs drug prevention education programs nationwide (ages 9-12)? Lincoln's program is currently called D.E.F.Y. (Drug Education for Youth) and is done in conjunction with the Malone Community Center. Contact Tami Soper, Malone Center, 474-1110.

12. How will you vote on "EXPANDED GAMBLING"?

NO

Any reliable data tells you the cost of gambling takes its toll in social cost: criminal behavior; financial ruin and bankruptcy; depression; abuse; divorce; homelessness; and suicide. We may keep dollars in Nebraska—but it will come at a cost.

YES - LR3

Allow two casinos in the state and Indian Tribes to operate them as well. It puts the legislature in charge. They would provide independent government oversight.

YES - #416-19

While a community can say no, it otherwise allows for an unknown number of casinos and slot machines. Control is in the hands of the lottery operators. Note: if this occurs, pickle card sales which currently benefit non-profits will be significantly impacted.

For more education go to:

The Gambling Study on this website.

Gambling for the Good Life: Opponent

Keep the Money in Nebraska: Proponent